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Editorial: Our dispatch is in disarray

Just like last month, last week's Howard County commissioners meeting was the latest skirmish in a battle between city, county, police and fire department officials over ongoing problems at the 911 dispatch center.

"Kokomo Fire Chief Nick Glover took the podium Monday to publicly address dispatch mistakes with Commissioners, a move Commissioner Paul Wyman criticized as 'political theatre,'" reported the Tribune's George Myers. "Following Glover's criticism of the Howard County Sheriff's Department 911 Communication Center — which included claims of continuing dispatch incompetence — Wyman questioned Glover's motives and criticized his failure to communicate directly with Sheriff Steve Rogers. On multiple occasions, Wyman and Howard County Attorney Larry Murrell referred to the 'boxes of [dispatch] complaints' that city officials said they possess during July's council meeting, questioning why Glover continues to publicly address the issue if he hasn't relayed such information to Rogers."

The city has an obligation to talk about ongoing, unaddressed problems with the dispatch system. It made the community aware of

these complications through the media, in meetings and elsewhere. The county must acknowledge there's a problem, and the city has to be part of its solution.

There are simple ways these discrepancies could be addressed. For one, too many non-emergency calls are going through the dispatch system. Could these calls be fielded by some other entity separate from dispatch, which has only minutes to act before lives are ruined or saved?

"Of the more than 222,000 calls the center fielded in 2014, a little more than 39 percent were nonemergency calls made to the city," reported the Tribune's Lauren Slagter in her Aug. 1 story. "When KPD's administrative offices are closed — which includes weekends and after 4 p.m. on weekdays — incoming calls are forwarded to the dispatch center."

Another point would be to streamline protocols between different agencies. City fire, police and every other department seem to have a different order of operations of how to handle these types of calls. Could they not come up with one universal system and stick to it?

These are but a few of the ways we could improve matters. Fingers being pointed help no one. There is an amicable way to resolve this. It

doesn't have to be political just because we're in a campaign season.

For everyone's safety, please, work together and fix this.